

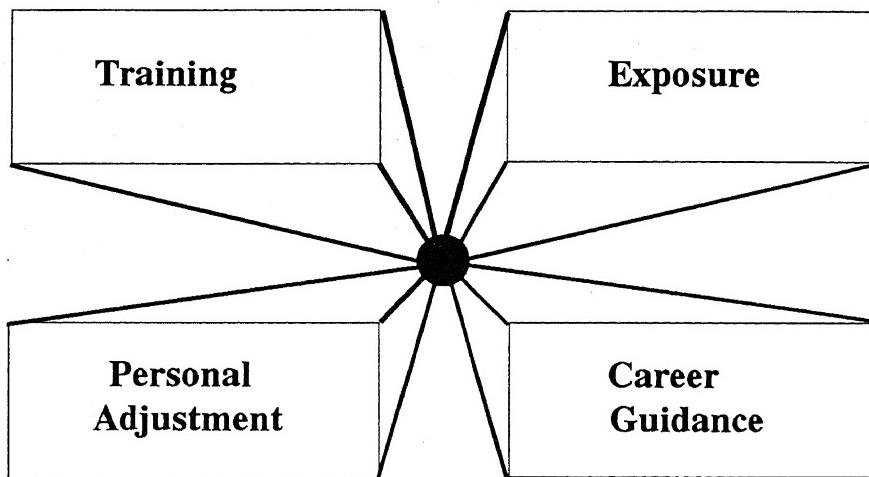
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Program Development Guide

**Entry-Level Clerical Employment Programs:
A Federal Response to Current Labor Market Challenges**



**The Federal Advisory Council
on Entry-Level Employment**



**United States
Office of
Personnel
Management**

Career Entry and
Employee
Development
Group

Office of
Personnel
Research and
Development

1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415-0001

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

**ENTRY-LEVEL CLERICAL
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS:**

**A FEDERAL RESPONSE TO
CURRENT LABOR MARKET CHALLENGES**

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**Chair
The Federal Advisory Council
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FOREWORD

This guide was written to provide assistance to program developers who are considering, conceptualizing, planning, and/or implementing employment programs to enhance the quality and careers of entry-level clerical employees.

It applies to the employment of the full range of clerical employees, regardless of whether they are clerk-typists, secretaries, payroll clerks, personnel clerks, accounting clerks, or any other clerical-level or similar occupational group. The guide is a resource document that shares information about successful programs which exist in various Federal agencies. The guide is not an effort to present the ultimate "model" program; we, the authors of this guide and the programs discussed herein, are still learning.

The Federal Advisory Council on Entry-Level Employment consists of program developers and managers who, quite by chance, became aware of each others' programs. Because of the success of their programs, their awareness of the valuable assistance that could be provided to agencies developing such programs, and the potential for learning and developing improved program techniques, these developers and managers decided to form the Advisory Council.

We hope that our experience as presented in this guide will be helpful to your plans and endeavors.

THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This guide describes and explains the development and progress of five Federal entry-level clerical employment programs. By entry-level clerical, we are referring to the full range of clerical jobs and are not restricting our discussion to secretaries and clerk-typists. These programs represent a successful response to the difficulties faced by many Federal employers seeking to fill entry-level positions in the current job market. This job market is characterized by the following conditions:

- o A shrinking entry-level (ages 18-24) labor pool resulting from previous birth-rate changes.
- o A labor pool with an increasing proportion of candidates whose skills do not match current entry-level job requirements.
- o Private sector employers armed with substantially higher entry-level salaries competing against Federal employers.

Entry-level Employment (EE) Programs attempt to remedy these difficulties by providing a continuous source of trained, motivated, and otherwise prepared employees who are ready for substantive work assignments as soon as they report to their permanent jobs. EE training and development activities yield additional advantages:

- o Assist hiring officials in streamlining the recruiting, examining/selecting, and training of new employees.
- o Provide means of ensuring quality job candidates.
- o Enhance the Federal image and recruiting power by offering paid training and job preparation.

EE programs, as discussed in this guide, are a means by which employers provide intensive training, exposure to the work environment, and actual work experiences to new employees before they report to their actual job sites.

Typically, new employees are hired and sent to a training unit where they spend from 2-3 months to a year in structured training and development activities. When they complete the training program, the new employees are fully prepared for placement and possess the necessary skills for successful job performance. At that point, they are eligible for permanent job assignments in the agency. These programs also serve as an excellent screening device for determining job suitability of job candidates; there can be no better screening process than actual and continuous demonstrated performance.

It should be noted that, without exception, these EE programs contain a clear and strongly emphasized performance requirement: The trainee is required to perform successfully throughout the program; failure to do so will lead to termination of the trainee prior to any permanent placement.

It should also be noted that when faced with a performance problem, all programs put forth sincere and intensive efforts to counsel, rehabilitate, duly warn, and/or assist the trainee, as needed, before issuing a termination.

Skills Levels. It is important to note that EE programs are suitable, beneficial, and/or necessary for all levels of employee capability. Agencies have found that even the most capable new-hires benefit from participation in these programs. The EE program design is not restricted to marginally-prepared employees; while it is, obviously, a valuable approach for upgrading those with marginal skills, its optimal design and utilization may be applied to all levels of employee preparation and capability.

As mentioned above, EE training not only provides training and skills enhancement, but also the emotional support, the exposure to the work environment and job expectations, and other critical social and personal adjustments designed to smooth the way to a productive and fulfilling work experience. This is not a new concept as it has been successfully used in the past. Neither is the need for such programs new; organizations have always had a need to provide proper orientation and training for new workers. Finally, agencies can improve the overall quality of their workforce by using the program as a model for training incumbent employees as well as new-hires.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, we elaborate upon program development considerations applicable to the development of any EE programs. These considerations are divided into four areas:

- Initial Development Process
- Recruitment and Selection
- Program Structure
- Placement and Evaluation

The following is not a prescription for a given program but, instead, is a discussion of various considerations, alternatives, factors, etc. that program developers should work through when conceptualizing and planning their programs. Throughout this section, we refer to the five model programs whose experiences guide the writing of this manual. These programs are:

- o Operation Jumpstart
U.S. Department of Agriculture
- o The Clerical/Secretarial Training Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture
- o The Clerical Support Program
U.S. Department of Labor
- o The Clerical Apprentice Program
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
- o The Clerical Training Program
Panama Canal Commission

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

It is important that program planners have a clear conceptualization of the *program objectives* and agency staffing needs. There must be an honest, reasonable assessment of the range of candidate qualifications the program can or should accommodate; this assessment should be based on program objectives, resources, and other relevant factors. Planners should have realistic expectations regarding skills levels and potential performance levels of the trainees. This conceptualization should be clearly articulated, understood, and supported by agency management and unions. Program planners should also consider the following:

Management Involvement. To the extent practical, agency management should be involved in and committed to the program development and planning process. This includes providing the necessary planning resources to build the program successfully.

Use of a Task Force or Advisory Group. It is helpful to utilize a task force or advisory group in planning and development stages. Some program developers used an advisory group consisting of successful incumbents with secretarial/clerical experience and/or professionals in secretarial/clerical training in developing the program. Agencies also utilized the assistance of personnelists, budget and procurement officers, and subject-matter experts in the development and implementation of their programs.

In-house Training Expertise. Program planners should note that the expertise of the staff and designers of existing secretarial/clerical training programs is an important resource for planning, designing, and implementing EE programs.

Federal Guidelines. Agencies used Federal guidelines regarding candidate qualifications in selecting candidates for their programs. As can be seen in the program descriptions, agencies tailored their specific selection criteria to the content and objectives of their programs.

Projected Trainee Population. Care should be taken to design the training format, course sequence, and training content to suit the projected trainee population. For example, if trainees are high school graduates, emphasis should be placed on review and applications as opposed to remediation of high school coursework.

Trainer/Instructor Selection

Selection of program trainers/instructors is a key aspect of the program development process. EE training is a very challenging activity. Our recommendations regarding desirable characteristics of program trainers/ instructors include the following:

Meaningful experience as an instructor or trainer

- Solid background in clerical training
- Energetic and confident
- Good oral and written communications skills
- Comfortable in speaking before groups
- Ability to project a positive image consistent with agency expectations (includes styles of behavior and appearance)
- Ability to relate, comfortably, with the trainee population

Trainer/Trainee Ratio

With the exception of the **Department of Labor (DOL)** program, experience suggests that there should be at least one professional trainer for every 5-10 trainees. This ratio yielded the most cost-effective effort to provide the crucial individualized attention required for successful trainee progress. It also provided more opportunity for full trainee involvement in program activities.

The DOL program operates on a different basis than the other programs. It sends its trainees to work assignments in other offices immediately upon program entry. The work assignment supervisors in these other offices provide job training, monitoring, and skills evaluation for the assigned trainees. Thus, DOL trainees receive individualized attention from the work assignment supervisors. Using this format, a much higher number of trainees per program trainer is permissible.

Trainee Age/Experience Mix

The array of programs examined in this guide afforded an opportunity to review the impact of different mixes of age and experience in the trainee group.

Having a group consisting primarily of recent high school graduates with limited work experience requires program emphasis and effort to deal with personal growth, adjustment, motivation, time and attendance, peer pressure, and other issues related to employees making the transition from students to workers.

Selecting a group consisting primarily of mature trainees with a fair amount of work experience requires that the program be prepared to deal with ingrained poor work habits/attitudes, difficulties in changing behaviors, and cynicism resulting from negative work experiences.

Selecting a mixed group reduces the problems associated with homogeneous groups, but results in other problems related to group cohesiveness, planning/conducting training for

highly divergent group needs, and general administrative difficulties associated with what may amount to two training programs in one session.

There appears to be no escape from difficulties associated with age/experience mix. Planners should be sensitive to these potential difficulties and build appropriate options into their programs.

Training Environment

A key aspect of the successful program is the training environment. An adequate training environment will facilitate learning, development, and adjustment. Obvious requirements are that the training room be well-lit, well-ventilated, comfortable, and to the extent possible, spacious. Planners should note that a stuffy, crowded, and/or poorly furnished training room will create discomfort which will be a distraction from the training efforts. Less obvious requirements focus on factors such as room location, sound proofing, and access to windows.

A windowless room in the agency's sub-basement sends the wrong recruiting message and also creates a possible distraction to learning. Training programs with their instructors, presentations, exercises, etc. create sound levels which may disturb neighboring offices. On the other hand, noise from outside corridors/neighboring offices may distract trainee concentration. Such problems were encountered by at least one of the discussed programs. Sound proofing considerations are very important. Nevertheless, it is a fact that agencies will have to work with what is available. With that in mind, planners should exercise creativity and resourcefulness to make the training room as comfortable as possible.

Training equipment is an important factor which is tied to the program budget. When affordable, programs have found that audio-visual equipment such as overhead projectors, videocassette recorders, camcorders, and television monitors are significant aids for presenting training materials as well as for trainee practice and awareness of communications and interpersonal skills.

Given the gradual decrease in typewriter and word processor usage, coupled with the increase in personal computer (PC) usage for data and word processing, the latter would probably be the long-range choice for these programs. PC's also permit the use of self-paced computer-assisted training modules. An agency standard for word processing software is advisable (e.g., WordPerfect used agencywide).

Depending on the nature of the training program, it may be beneficial to design the training room to simulate a work environment. Including work stations, files, work equipment, work areas, desks, reception areas, and office communications equipment in the training room can increase the program's capability to provide job-related realism in its training activities, tests, exercises, diagnostics, and evaluations.

Program Image/Labeling

During the development and initial implementation stages of these programs, we have noted some problems associated with employee and management perceptions of the program purpose and participants. There is a tendency to perceive these programs in a limited, inaccurate, and stereotypical fashion. As we designers/conductors see it, these programs are designed for the full-range of entry-level employees.

Assuredly, these programs can be very beneficial to employees with skill deficiencies. In no way, however, should EE programs be limited to such purposes. While spurred on by recent labor market conditions, establishment of these programs was always needed, and their current development is certainly overdue. Program developers should help top management understand the full potential contribution of these programs.

Image and expectation go hand in hand; both should be positive. An enduring understanding of human behavior is that whenever there is a clear expectation of positive performance, there is consequently a tendency for it. Positive expectations within the agency as well as the program go a long way in promoting training success.

Human Potential and Capability

Program designers and evaluators need to clearly understand that traditional measures of human behavior (potential and capability) are under increasing scrutiny. Various professional organizations and other groups have raised serious concerns regarding the validity and fairness of these measures. Moreover, traditional notions of learning, training, and associated measures are also undergoing change. Until there is renewed clarity on these issues, designers and evaluators should be careful, flexible, and creative in their approaches to measuring aspects of learning, training, aptitude, and performance.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Recruitment Strategies

The programs discussed in this guide used proactive methods to obtain quality candidates for trainee slots. Regardless of the type of candidates being sought for the program, it was found beneficial to go beyond the ordinary use of vacancy announcements. A wide variety of recruitment strategies was utilized, such as:

- o Adopting schools and/or establishing close working relationships with administrative/placement/faculty personnel at designated high schools and other secondary training institutions.
- o Contacting religious umbrella groups and/or selecting specific churches and synagogues with acknowledged numbers of potential entry-level candidates; conducting workshops, exposure programs, and/or interview sessions in these organizations.
- o Working with state and local employment programs, business education partnerships, etc. to identify and select candidates.

The focus here is "proactive" recruitment; the program developers should include or utilize individuals who have contacts or are familiar with the social environment of the target population.

This discussion is particularly relevant for *recruiting males*. Because of traditional socialization and education factors, males may be less likely than females to seek and possess the required skills and/or interest suitable for the word processing/typing emphasis in the current Federal entry-level labor market.

Memoranda of Agreement

Because of the unique nature of these programs, the effort and experience required, and the agency's vested interest in reaping the benefits of training efforts, it is important that trainees fully understand the program and its expectations. Agencies have approached this issue by developing memoranda of agreement with program participants.

These memoranda fully define the responsibilities and requirements of the program. Trainees are requested to read the memos and indicate their complete comprehension and agreement with a signature. This is an important aspect of the selection process, enhancing the cost effectiveness of the program by minimizing the incidence of trainee dropouts due to misunderstandings of program content, objectives, and/or expectations.

While an agency cannot legally require program participants to commit to a specified period

of post-training employment with the agency, EE programs have been successful in establishing positive relationships with their trainees which have led to excellent retention rates. Moreover, while the trainee's marketability is substantially increased by successful completion of the program, a well-planned, career-oriented placement in the agency will also enhance retention.

Rationale for Temporary Appointments

Two programs, *Operation Jumpstart* and the *Clerical Apprentice Program*, are utilizing temporary appointments for hiring and training program participants. The rationale is primarily motivational and regulatory.

Hired under temporary appointments, the trainees are informed that they are not eligible for certain benefits and rights granted to permanent employees. These trainees are informed that if they do not perform up to program requirements, they will be dismissed forthwith; they have no appeal rights or rights to normal removal procedures. On the other hand, trainees are also informed that upon successful completion of the EE program, they will be eligible for permanent positions in the agency. This use of temporary employment serves to motivate trainees to put forth a serious effort.

Additionally, temporary appointment authorities afford agencies far greater flexibility and freedom to hire candidates under the circumstances they choose. For example, candidates can be direct-hired into GS-1 Temporary Appointments Pending Establishment of a Register (TAPER) without using tests and certain other Civil Service requirements. (See Table 14-D in Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 296-33.) GS-1 TAPER positions are also eligible for exemption from full-time equivalent (FTE) ceiling restrictions.

It should be noted that the programs reported no adverse recruiting effects due to the use of temporary appointments. It was emphasized to the trainees that these programs offer high quality training and on-the-job experience (with pay) leading to improved skills and job marketability.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Performance Standards

Training programs should have both the normal work-related performance standards (e.g., demonstrate fully reliable work habits) and training related standards (e.g., trainees will know basic microcomputer operating system commands and terminology; trainees will be able to type reports, memoranda, rosters, and forms with minimal errors). Given the importance of trainee seriousness and commitment regarding the program as well as the difficulty for some trainees to make the transition from school to work, it is critical that these standards be clear, firm, and communicated up-front prior to selection to the program. These standards should be re-emphasized at the time of selection, when trainees report for duty, and at other times as needed throughout the program.

It has been observed, in various training arenas, that training-based standards and/or training program standards are sometimes taken lightly by trainees. Planners should prepare for the cavalier attitude of some trainees that this is not "real" work but merely "training." It is helpful to show a direct linkage between the job performance standards and the training standards to make the latter meaningful to trainees.

Individualized Training

Given market pressures, uncertain selection techniques, and agency requirements, it is very likely that there will be some diversity in the level of preparation of the trainees. When there are diverse levels of preparation, training should have the capacity to meet different needs of individual trainees.

Moreover, most of these trainees will have attended secondary schools in which class size and other factors have minimized the degree of individual attention. The training program need not repeat a situation in which well-prepared and less well-prepared trainees participate in the same training plan which does not have the capacity to meet their special needs.

There is a wide range of individualized approaches available to training programs (favorable trainer/trainees ratios, computer-assisted training modules, interactive-video modules, manually-conducted modules, etc.). Program developers should provide for liberal and flexible use of methods of individualized training.

Counseling (Personal/Career)

Counseling is a key component of these entry-level training programs. It is very helpful, especially for programs with younger and less-experienced trainees, to have a trainer who has some experience and comfort in personal counseling. For the younger employees, transitional (high school-to-workplace) issues are abundant. Older trainees have other personal adjustment

issues. While EE programs should not attempt to deal with problems requiring professional psychological counseling, they should have the capacity to ease the day-to-day stress and concerns of the trainees. Keep in mind that "attitude" problems almost always surface in these programs.

Career counseling is equally important. Career counseling, however, need not be conducted by the program trainer. While it is advantageous if performed by the program trainer, effective career counseling can be conducted by someone else, such as a mentor. Career counseling is important at the entry-level because many of the trainees lack a future time perspective (a wandering employee with no career goals is not likely to be comfortable and motivated in a job) and because many of the trainees will also lack exposure to the diversity of Federal positions.

Practice, Short-Term, and Rotational Work Assignments

An entry-level training program is not high school or a repeat thereof. Consequently, a key ingredient in these programs is application. Training programs should contain a heavy dose of work-related applications of the trainee's knowledge and skills. The common pattern noted in model programs consists of practice, short-term work assignments, and rotational work assignments.

Practice consists of trainees performing work-related applications of the training. It is typically performed in the training room, immediately after the associated training, and under the trainer's guidance and oversight. Feedback on performance should be immediate; the trainee should practice again and be given additional feedback.

Short-term work assignments are general assignments (not necessarily related to training) performed in or out of the training room. These assignments are generally in the form of back-up or overload work performed by the training program for other agency organizations. The training purposes for these assignments are general development of skill and discipline to handle normal work assignments, development of an "at work" aura to balance the "in training" emphasis of the program, and marketing of the training program to gain full agency support.

Job rotations are usually long-term (2 weeks to 3 months) assignments of trainees to a series of organizations/positions within the agency. These rotations are designed to provide exposure and work experience, to give management an opportunity to observe and evaluate the performance of trainees for prospective permanent selection, and to provide program marketing.

Effective timing of work-assignments and job rotations appears variable and contingent upon the nature of the training program. Some programs send trainees out on short-term or rotational work assignments immediately upon entry to the program; other programs begin with a focus on formal training, leaving work assignments/rotations for later in the program.

Adequate communication between the trainer and agency personnel supervising the trainees while in short-term or rotational work assignments is essential. The trainer should establish guidelines on the appropriate types of work assignments and performance evaluations.

Personal Adjustment Issues

A crucial aspect of these programs that cannot be over-emphasized is personal adjustment. While we typically refer to these programs as training programs, in truth they are much more than that.

Developing word processing or communications skills is one thing; developing motivation, proper attitudes, compatible values, interpersonal comfort (especially regarding cultural, status, organizational, and authority differences), coping skills, and above all, self-esteem is a truly challenging aspect of the success of these programs.

While there are many important considerations for handling adjustment issues, we will mention the following:

- o Lecture is less effective than activities in which the trainee is actively involved in opportunities for experiencing and understanding the consequences of behavior (e.g., role play, self-perception exercises, and real life circumstances involving the trainee, peers, trainers, etc.).
- o Initially to some trainers, trainee adjustment problems may appear intractable; such trainers may respond with lowered expectations and discouragement which, unfortunately, are passed on to the trainee. Trainers should have the personal capacity and confidence to maintain a supportive and positive attitude toward the trainees. Experience shows that such an attitude combined with the points made above will usually overcome adjustment problems.
- o The program should be based on and should manifest a genuine and patient concern for the trainees. Trust, based on trainee perception of program concern and commitment, will provide much of the motivation required to successfully address adjustment issues.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

Placement and Agency Commitment

Among the key aspects of any EE program are the placement process and associated career opportunities for program participants. This can be a tricky area for program developers who may face an interesting set of circumstances.

Some managers feel strongly that the provision of training is sufficient agency responsibility to the trainee; in order to achieve a permanent placement, therefore, the trainee must market himself or herself to agency managers and be selected on that basis. In such programs, there are no guarantees of placement--a program participant who is not selected within a specified length of time will be terminated.

On the other hand, many will question the wisdom of expending the money and effort to train and then terminate a trainee, leaving no benefit to the organization's employment needs. Some agencies have avoided this problem by adopting a subtle but clear commitment (avoiding strong terms such as "guarantee") to permanent employment for program participants.

Some agencies have relied on the current high demand for quality clerical employees to keep the issue from surfacing. Program developers will need to examine management sentiment and politics, as well as the agency demand for clerical employees, before adopting a program placement stance.

Regardless of placement philosophy, placement procedures should be integral to the program and take advantage of the options provided by EE programs. For example, the EE programs discussed in this guide provide for trainee rotational assignments which give agency managers an adequate, non-committal, and beneficial amount of time to observe trainee job performance prior to selection. Placement procedures/activities should be coordinated with participating agency managers and clearly spelled out to managers and candidates for the program.

Post-Placement Career Opportunities

Most programs offer entry-level clerk-typist/secretarial opportunities to trainees upon completion of the program. To increase recruiting/retention power, however, a program designer is not limited to the latter opportunities.

The program design recommended by the author, for example, offers its program participants career ladder options in several occupational areas (such as personnel or accounting) in addition to secretarial. Thus, the participant may select a career area, obtain a placement in that area, and proceed non-competitively up the career ladder into the occupational area (e.g., to a GS-5/6 personnel assistant, accounting technician, or secretary). Some personnel managers consider the use of career ladders in diverse occupational areas as a highly efficient human resources management strategy; program developers should give these opportunities

some thought.

Post-Placement Monitoring/Tracking

From program continuity and evaluation standpoints, monitoring and tracking of program participants after their placements in the agency are a must. Such activities not only provide important data regarding program performance, but also monitor the progress of the program graduates, enhancing their full adjustment and success.

The programs discussed in this guide also provide activities which allow program graduates access to their former trainers to address any problems that arise.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation, obviously, is a major effort in itself. There is an abundance of guidelines and other literature regarding program evaluation. The actual nature of the evaluation, however, should be intimately tied to the program goals and objectives. Its design should be flexible enough to cover unexpected but important findings regarding the program.

The ultimate goal of EE programs is to provide quality employees in a cost-effective fashion. The ultimate objective is adequate training/preparation. Any evaluation must first determine whether the ultimate objective was achieved. This can be accomplished, for example, through the use of graduation assessment measures to evaluate trainees against training objectives.

If the evaluation shows that adequate training/preparation occurred, then the evaluation should focus on the job performance of program participants. Due consideration should be given to labor market conditions (which may invalidate direct cost comparisons between EE training and traditional hiring methods because the latter may become ineffective for use, leaving no choice for employers), the adequacy of diagnostic instruments (training objectives and associated diagnostics should be clearly job-related), and the adequacy of job performance measures/supervisory appraisals.

MODEL PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

In this section, we provide detailed descriptions of the five model programs on which this guide is based.

OPERATION JUMPSTART

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Hyattsville, Maryland**

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Operation Jumpstart was developed by *Rosemary Witcoff*, personnel management specialist in the Human Resources Division. Ms. Witcoff designed the recruitment/outreach systems, training curriculum, mentoring program, and evaluation systems with the assistance of the agency *Secretarial Advisory Council*. Program development included feasibility studies. Developmental time was approximately 8 months.

The program is designed for eight trainees. Program length is 3 months (minimum) to 5 months (maximum).

Program Objectives

Generally, the consensus among program and division managers is that the current system is not providing sufficient quality clerical support. Although a clear estimate of the current system's cost is difficult to determine, the lack of an adequately trained clerical workforce contributes to the agency's loss of efficiency and reduced productivity (e.g., supervisory time to proof and correct clerical errors, delays in reports, overtime needed to reprocess paperwork, lost documents, and poor public relations).

The objectives of this clerical employment program are to reduce or eliminate these intangible costs, hire and retain quality clerical support, and improve the efficiency of agency operations and service delivery by:

- o Providing the customer with clerical recruitment, training, evaluation, and placement services.
- o Recruiting well-trained competent clerk-typists and secretaries who have demonstrated good work ethics and are immediately available.
- o Improving the ability of the agency to compete for high quality clerical candidates.
- o Enhancing the image of the agency by staffing it with greater numbers of top-notch professional secretaries.
- o Building a fine track record in equal opportunity by providing a career path and training for a balanced clerical workforce.
- o Assigning clerical trainees to the customer to assist with special projects and provide relief services when incumbent secretaries are on leave.
- o Establishing a limited source of temporary relief clericals for division overflow workloads.

Program Budget

The estimated annual budget is \$317,375 for FY 1989. The pilot phase FY 1988 start-up budget was \$148,000.

Program funding sources: Agency pool (proportionate funding: agency programs provide funds proportional to their sizes); partner agency provides additional \$10,000 and one position.

Secretarial Advisory Council (SAC)

The SAC consists of the secretaries of APHIS' top management officials and is a valuable resource for the program. As subject matter experts, they first provided the impetus for the program, identifying the need to improve the quality of the clerical work force through an aggressive, coordinated approach to recruitment, selection, and training of new clericals.

The SAC provided technical assistance in all aspects of the program development and played key roles in its implementation. This includes recruitment activities at job fairs, schools, and community organizations; curriculum planning; orientation and training activities; mentoring; and program evaluation feedback. SAC's continuous involvement contributed substantially to the success of the program.

Program Staff

Program Manager (Program Specialist), GS-301-7/9/11. Responsible for overall management, coordination, improvement, and refinement of the program.

Program Assistant, GS-303-7. Responsible for day-to-day operation of the program; reports to program manager.

Clerk-Typist, GS-322-3/4. Provides general clerical support for the program.

Training Environment

Dedicated training room with capacity for eight workstations. Equipment: eight PRIME word-processing terminals and two AT&T microcomputers.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Operation Jumpstart seeks top-notch "cream of the crop" candidates. The program uses a variety of recruiting sources including Office of Personnel Management examining units; continuous relationships with specified high schools via high school vocational counselors; business schools, community colleges, state employment offices and employment agencies; agency cooperative education and Adopt-A-School programs; and community services/displaced homemakers' organizations.

Selection Process

Candidates must pass the Civil Service clerical examination and type 40 words per minute. Candidates are given higher consideration based on relevant (office) work experience and completed coursework/training in office skills. Final screening is via interviews which focus on candidate motivation, attitude, career goals, and expressed program interest.

Successful candidates are hired as GS-322 clerk-typists in temporary (not-to-exceed 1 year) appointments in grade levels 2, 3, or 4, depending on their qualifications and related skills.

Memorandum of Agreement

Prior to final acceptance to the program, candidates must read and sign a memorandum of agreement ensuring that they fully understand the nature and expectations of the program.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

Upon entry to the program, trainees are given 6 weeks of formal classroom training, administered by contractors and in-house trainers including the program assistant. During the 6-week training period, the trainees participate in a 1-week shadowing experience, perform practice work assignments from the agency overflow work system, and receive mentoring as well as career counseling.

Upon successful completion of the 6-week training phase, trainees are placed in 30-day temporary-duty assignments. Upon successful completion of the temporary-duty assignments, trainees are reassigned to career-conditional positions. After the career-conditional placements, trainee progress is tracked for 1 year and trainees participate in quarterly refresher training/reunion sessions to reinforce prior training and to establish networks.

Typical daily operation consists of formal training during the morning and practice/work assignments in the afternoon.

Training

Formal training covers word processing, correspondence and style, administrative procedures, professionalism/work ethics, telephone techniques, proofreading, punctuation and grammar, TELEMAIL, travel arrangements, and time/attendance procedures.

Training also includes on-the-job training and practice assignments associated with training modules offered under the overflow work system, during the shadowing experience, and during the 30-day temporary duty assignments.

Trainees are scheduled for applications work to practice their skills and developmental activities reflected in their Individual Development Plans (IDP's). They also attend 1-day field trips to observe agency field operations (e.g., Dulles Airport, Baltimore Harbor).

Mentoring/Training Activities

Secretarial Advisory Committee (SAC) members serve as key mentors for the trainees and provide them with ongoing guidance and advice regarding their individual career progress. As mentors, SAC members sponsor activities, such as the welcome/orientation reception on the first day of training, and participate in quarterly offsite refresher training sessions, conducting group discussions and addressing issues that impact on clerical employees. SAC members receive guidance and direction in mentoring from the program manager as well as structured training in mentoring.

Shadowing Activities

The SAC plans individual shadowing assignments in which trainees spend 1 day shadowing key mentors and the remainder of the week with designated secondary mentors (staff and division secretaries who oversee the shadowing activities and interact as role models with each trainee). The shadowing assignments occur in week 6 of the program and offer the trainees an opportunity to network with top level secretaries, gain experience in the day-to-day office environment, and increase their visibility.

Overflow Work System

Additional hands-on experience is gained through assigned clerical tasks using actual overflow work from APHIS divisions. These tasks may include typing correspondence and reports, filing,

telephone reception duties, indexing, duplicating, and other special assignments. Managers provide feedback on a performance checklist for each task performed by the trainees.

Career Counseling

All trainees receive continuous guidance on career development principles from the program manager, program assistant, guest speakers, and mentors who serve as role models and career advisors throughout the program.

There are presentations on values clarification, equal opportunity, work ethics, attitude, building a positive image, self-esteem, dressing for the work environment, goal-setting, and marketing one's skills.

Individual career counseling sessions are held weekly, beginning with week 2, to discuss any concerns and obtain feedback from each trainee. This allows program officials to identify and address any problem areas, develop remedies or solutions, and promote an atmosphere of genuine concern and support for the trainee's career progress.

The career counseling continues during the 12-week training program and is augmented by feedback from the temporary-duty supervisors. The program manager counsels with both the manager and the trainee to determine if a satisfactory working relationship has developed and if there is potential for achieving placement of the trainee in the clerical vacancy.

Temporary Duty Assignments

An announcement is issued to **APHIS** managers and supervisors describing the availability of temporary-duty clericals from Operation Jumpstart to work as relief clericals or to assist in work backlogs and special projects. Where there are vacancies, the participating manager sends a request to Operation Jumpstart certifying availability of work, a 30-day assignment, adequate office space, agreement to evaluate the trainee, and agreement to give full consideration to the trainee for filling the vacancy. Upon receipt of the temporary-duty requests, the Operation Jumpstart staff, utilizing knowledge of the trainees (based on career counseling data, skills measures, and observations of general personal attributes), determine optimal matches of trainees and temporary duty assignments. The temporary duty supervisor monitors the trainee's performance during the 30-day assignment and reports progress to the program manager on a 30-day performance checklist. The probationary period is fully utilized to ensure that only highly skilled candidates are referred for placement in the programs and divisions. The Operation Jumpstart program manager briefs the temporary duty supervisor prior to and during the 30-day assignments on how to help the new employee form good work habits, how to recognize performance problems, and how to counsel and assess the employee's progress.

There are joint counseling sessions which include the Operation Jumpstart program manager, supervisor, and trainee at regular intervals to ensure adequate monitoring of progress. These

sessions and the performance checklists provide continuous feedback on the trainee's performance to adequately track progress and promote successful placements.

The program assistant uses a computerized tracking procedure to provide a record of turnaround time from entrance on duty to the actual reassignment of the new clerical to a permanent position within APHIS.

Achievement Folders

During the training program, trainees create their own achievement folders in which they keep their completed exercises, summaries of the training experiences which they have written and presented to classmates, and their own weekly self-evaluations. These folders help trainees assess their skills levels and gain a sense of achievement as they track their own progress.

Clerical Resource Binders

The trainees compile their own individual clerical resource binders for reference during their shadowing and 30-day assignments and after completion of the program. The binders contain training materials, handouts, work samples, and exhibits of forms which the trainees use as reference sources in their future jobs with APHIS.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

Trainees must complete the program and be selected (no guarantee) by an agency office. Upon selection, they are reassigned to career-conditional positions at the grade level for which they qualify. Unselected trainees continue temporary rotational assignments within the program until selection.

Experience/Evaluation Based Recommendations for Program Modification

Management officials have recommended an increase in practice and reinforcement scheduled in the post-placement quarterly refresher training sessions. Recommended areas of emphasis are: Completing government forms, international travel arrangements, time and attendance procedures, and conference call techniques.

Program Performance

The Operation Jumpstart Clerical Employment Program has clearly become a model of an

innovative way to staff clerical vacancies. From its inception, the program has contributed to increased visibility and a positive image for APHIS as a progressive leader among its counterparts.

One indirect result of the program is that it has helped the agency to develop stronger linkages with other agencies and the local community. Because Operation Jumpstart has operated with adequate human and monetary resources and used effective systems for recruiting, hiring, training, and placing quality candidates into the organization, it has proven successful in meeting its objectives; providing APHIS managers with a viable option for swiftly and effectively filling clerical vacancies with quality candidates; and contributing to the upgrading of the overall quality of the agency's clerical workforce. The program has also been beneficial because it has provided managers with additional support during peak workloads, resulting in increased productivity of overflow work for APHIS offices.

In building a quality workforce, it should be noted that recruiting and hiring is just one-half of the issue and that employee retention continues to present a challenge in meeting the needs of the organization. It is recommended that consideration be given to the development of a Clerical Retention Program to supplement Operation Jumpstart. Such a program would provide a multi-faceted system of incentives, such as flexible work schedules, "work-at-home" and job-sharing programs, special pay rates, free parking, fitness center, spousal placement and day care programs, and other innovative programs used by agencies and private industry to improve the quality of work life and promote job satisfaction.

In planning for the future, APHIS managers could look to the Operation Jumpstart Clerical Employment Program and a supplementary Clerical Retention Program as models that might be adapted to meet the staffing needs for other shortage occupations.

Class 1
June 1988

Eight trainees were appointed to temporary clerk-typist positions at the GS-2 level. Trainees included seven females (six minority) and one male. Age/experience mix: All recent high school graduates. Eight trainees completed the program and were placed.

Class 2
August 1988

Eight trainees were appointed to temporary clerk-typist positions at various GS-2/3/4 levels. Trainees included seven females (two minority) and one male. Age/experience mix: Two recent high school graduates, one university student, and five from private industry or job-market re-entry. Seven trainees completed the program and were placed. The male trainee dropped out for health reasons.

Class 3
March 1989

Seven trainees were appointed to temporary clerk-typist positions at various GS-2/3/4 levels. The trainees included six females (two minority) and one minority male. Age/experience mix: Three university students and four from private industry or job market re-entry. Seven trainees completed the program and were placed.

Class 4
June 1989

Eight trainees were appointed to temporary clerk-typist positions at various GS-2/3/4 levels. All trainees are female (6 minority). Age/experience mix: Four employee referrals, two recent high school graduates, and one secretarial school. The program is ongoing at this time.

EXHIBIT 1

SAMPLE TRAINING PLAN

WEEK 1

Orientation to APHIS

Employee learns about the mission and organization of the agency and its programs. (1/2 day)

Word Processing Text Training

Employee learns how to use the PRIME word processing system; typing, spelling, editing, and formatting skills. (4 days)

WEEK 2

Practical Applications of Word Processing Text Training

WEEK 3

Orientation, Assessment, and Planning Workshop

Addresses secretary's role in APHIS. Employee completes self-assessment competency guide--skills and relevance of skills to job performance; office management, filing and records systems, stress management, organizing time and work; and IDP's are developed. (5 days)

WEEK 4

Practical Applications and Developmental Activities

WEEK 5

Correspondence and Style

Employee learns how to construct letters, reports, memoranda, etc. in the proper format. Writing (vocabulary usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling) proofreading, and editing skills. (2 days)

WEEK 6

Agency Administrative Procedures

Employee learns how to prepare and process travel vouchers, time and attendance records, purchase orders, budget, mail and distribution, forms and reports, and all correspondence procedures. (2-3 days)

Practical Applications - Forms Preparation and Processing

WEEK 7

TELEMAIL

Employee learns how to use automated communications systems to send and receive messages within and external to APHIS. (1 day)

Telephone Techniques

Employee learns to give and receive complete, accurate messages and to create a professional customer service image by telephone. (1/2 day)

EXHIBIT 2

OPERATION JUMPSTART MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT - TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Introduction:

Welcome to the Operation Jumpstart (OJ) Program. We are confident that you will find the Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) an interesting and exciting place to work. The OJ Program is designed to give you the opportunity to learn about your work environment and to demonstrate and improve your skills. We believe that this program will be the first step toward a rewarding career for you in the Government Service.

You have been accepted into the OJ Program under a temporary appointment. This appointment will not exceed 1 year; however, be assured that the goal of the OJ program is not only to train you, but to place you into a permanent position as well.

During your OJ training you will receive a full paycheck (amount will vary in accordance with the grade level at which you enter the Federal Service.) You will also earn annual and sick leave in accordance with Government regulations. Upon graduation from the program, we will endeavor to place you in a permanent position as a fully trained and valuable resource in APHIS. At the time you receive your permanent position, you are then eligible for health and life insurance benefits. In addition, you are then eligible to apply and compete for higher graded clerical vacancies, should you wish.

You will serve a probationary period of 1 year that will start at the beginning of your temporary appointment. It is our experience that those motivated employees who work hard and maintain a high level of performance through positive attitudes and good work habits, will immediately be selected for permanent positions. After placement in a permanent, career-conditional position, you will continue to receive career counseling and your career progress will be tracked not only by your supervisor, but also by the OJ program personnel for 1 year following placement. A quarterly survey sheet will be provided to you each quarter. You will be expected to fill it out and return it to the OJ supervisor so that your progress can be tracked.

About Your Job:

Your position is located in the OJ Clerical Development Group, Career Systems and Recruitment, Recruitment and Development. This group receives 8 weeks of intensive clerical training/applications

work and performance tracking. You will be required to complete practice exercises, write summaries of your training experiences, and build your own achievement folder. At the same time, OJ also provides a variety of clerical services to offices in need of clerical assistance. As an employee of this group, you will be assigned to work in different agency offices and will

occasionally perform interim or relief clerical support work. The length of these assignments will vary, but most will be for 30 days, or longer.

Because you move from office to office through the organization, you have the opportunity not only to build a fine reputation by demonstrating good clerical skills, but also to learn more about the organization and become familiar with those offices in which you may have more interest. This enhances your opportunities to be hired by an APHIS office on a permanent basis. The guidelines provided in this memo will be helpful to you in building an excellent work reputation to assist you in completing the OJ program and progressing onward into a permanent position.

Responsibilities and Conduct:

- Your working hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. These hours may be changed during your 30-day assignments with the approval of the assignment supervisor.
- On a daily basis, you are to use the sign-in sheet to record your arrival and departure times, as well as any leave-taken. Discuss all time and attendance questions with the supervisor (name), who may be reached at (telephone number).
- While in the OJ Program, your lunch hour will normally be a half hour, usually from 12 noon until 12:30 p.m. However, this is subject to change--depending on the training instructor.
- Employees should request advanced approval for absence from duty. Approval of leave is requested from your assigned supervisor on form SF-71, "Application for Leave." Upon approval, this form is to be given to your time and attendance (T&A) clerk (name), for inclusion in your T&A file. Although Federal employees earn leave, it is the supervisor's responsibility to approve when it will be taken, based on the needs of the agency. Appropriate leave may be authorized for emergencies; a medical certificate from your doctor may be requested if taking excessive sick leave interferes with the completion of the training or your performance.
- Contact your assigned supervisor no later than the scheduled reporting time if you are going to arrive late or if you are going to be absent. If you are late or cannot report for duty, upon return to work you are to provide your assigned supervisor with a signed SF-71. Keep in mind that your position provides clerical assistance where there is generally none available and that dependability is a **MUST**. Abuse of leave may be cause for termination from the program.
- Work hard and resist the temptation to socialize on the job. Keep personal telephone calls and visits to a minimum, and only as necessary.
- Carefully review your work to ensure that it is prepared correctly. This includes proofreading typed materials for accuracy prior to submission to originator.
- When leaving your work station, always inform someone of your whereabouts. If you are going to be away for a long time (i.e., big photocopying project, etc.) make sure that you

indicate this as well.

- Show initiative. If you do not have any work to do, ask for some. If there is not any at that time, practice your typing and word processing skills. You should always keep busy and productive.

I have read and understand all the guidelines. I am aware of what is expected of me in order to successfully complete my training. I accept this position fully aware that my placement into a permanent position depends on my successful completion of the program and on current or planned vacancies for which I am qualified.

SIGNATURE

DATE

CLERICAL/SECRETARIAL TRAINING PROGRAM

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
Washington, D.C.**

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Clerical/Secretarial Training Program (C/STP) is very similar to Operation Jumpstart of the same agency. This abbreviated program description outlines the areas of difference between the two programs.

The C/STP was developed by **Loretta Gladden**, supervisory clerical training specialist. Ms. Gladden used a **Secretarial Advisory Committee** to assist in program development. Developmental time was approximately 3 months.

The program is designed for four trainees. Funding is from program user fees.

Program Objectives

The goals of the program are to:

- o Identify high potential, highly motivated individuals who may be lacking the necessary skills to perform in clerical and secretarial careers.
- o Provide training in an organized curriculum to give them the skills to succeed in clerical positions at the Agricultural Marketing Service.
- o Provide a mechanism for enhancing the retention rate of the clerical and secretarial workforce.

Program Staff

Program Coordinator (Supervisory Clerical Training Specialist), GS-301-9. Responsible for overall direction, management, and coordination of the program.

Training Environment

Dedicated training room with four work stations. Equipment: two IBM personal computers and two AT&T personal computers.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Successful candidates are hired as GS-322 clerk-typists in career conditional appointments. Upon entering on duty in the C/STP, these employees become part of the Personnel Division. When job offers are accepted by C/STP employees (upon program completion), they are removed from the rolls of the Personnel Division and reassigned to the hiring division.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

During the first week of the program, an initial assessment is made of each employee's basic skill level, focusing on reading, math, and communications (written and verbal) skills. Instruments used are validated adult basic education assessment materials. Assessment results are used to identify weaknesses and deficiencies in order to develop supplemental training on an individualized basis. Results are known only to the assessor, the clerical program supervisor, and the employee.

Daily Activities

Daily activities include "reflections," a time set aside at the end of each day to record (via "short essay") events of the day, review areas of interest, and interact on a less formal basis. Participants frequently use a tape recorder when reading their "essay" aloud to the group. This technique has proven valuable in helping to build confidence and develop verbal skills. The employee, his/her peers, and the program supervisor provide critiques of verbal skills; the tape recording helps to track individual progress.

Performance Standards

Program employees are evaluated according to the agency's generic performance elements and standards for clerk-typists and secretaries. Evaluations occur at the end of a 90-day appraisal period.

Temporary Duty Assignments

In contrast to Operation Jumpstart, C/STP employees do not perform work overflow assignments, relief clerical duties, or clerical assistance on special assignments from agency

divisions.

During the 2-month formal training period, C/STP employees are assigned office duties which rotate on a weekly basis (i.e., telephone coverage and receptionist duties; preparing time and attendance reports; typing; sorting, routing and logging mail; running errands; photocopying; filing; processing procurement orders; maintaining program supervisor's calendar; etc.).

On-the-Job Training (OJT) Assignments

On-the-job training assignments last for 1 month, but C/STP employees spend only 1 week in each office. During this time, selecting officials can observe the employees' performance and employees can decide whether they would want a permanent position in the office should a job offer be made.

Agency divisions are notified by memoranda when employees are ready for OJT assignments. Requests are sent to the C/STP supervisor who schedules the OJT rotations. First priority is given to offices with clerical vacancies.

Before employees report for any OJT assignment, the program supervisor meets with the requesting office supervisor. During this time, the program supervisor discusses the scheduling of program employees to be rotated through that office, the evaluation process which is to take place during the OJT assignments, the skills/strengths of the employees, and answers questions, etc.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

After successful completion of the formal as well as the OJT, employees are interviewed by agency offices with clerical/ secretarial vacancies. When job offers are made and accepted by C/STP employees, those employees are taken off of the rolls of the Personnel Division and reassigned to the hiring division.

Permanent Job Placement

The acceptance of job offers by program employees is strictly the decision of the employees. They are allowed to reject one job offer but must accept the second offer. If asked, the C/STP supervisor can make recommendations to agency selecting officials. Recommendations are based on knowledge of the employees' strengths and the particular skills required to effectively and efficiently perform the job assignments of the requesting office. Selecting officials are not obligated to accept the recommendation of the program supervisor. Selecting officials are strongly encouraged to interview program employees before making job offers.

Program Performance

The program is meeting its objectives. Based on feedback from supervisors of the employees, the program has exceeded the original expectations. Comments from supervisors highlight the motivation, confidence, and professionalism that employees of the program bring to their new permanent positions.

Two of the original four employees have already received their second promotion since leaving the program. Every employee of the program was promoted upon leaving the program.

Based on the success of the original program, the agency has requested that the training institute design and implement a similar program for *incumbent* clerical and secretarial personnel in the Agricultural Marketing Service.

*Class 1
January 1989*

Four employees (all minority) were appointed to career-conditional clerk-typist positions. All employees completed the program and were placed.

CLERICAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

**U.S. Department of Labor
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration
and Management
Washington, D.C.**

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Clerical Support Program was developed by **Madeline Coleman**, a management analyst with clerical experience and supervisory skills. Ms. Coleman utilized an advisory committee consisting of current and former DOL clerical employees. The advisory committee's charter was to ensure that program components and the training curriculum included all facets of clerical work associated with the trainee's future responsibilities in the Department of Labor. Initial program development was completed in approximately 4 months.

The number of trainees varies from 15 to 25. Program length is also variable, based on assessed individual skills.

Program Objectives

Our program was designed to:

- o provide an immediate source of back-up clerical support to fill temporary absences of clerical employees;
- o serve as a source of temporary assistance during periods of peak workloads;
- o provide an in-house training source for current staff for uninterrupted skills enhancement;
- o reduce staff time required for filling critical support staff positions.

Program Budget

Start-up budget for the pilot program was \$160,000. The operating budget is \$280,000. Funding was used primarily for salaries, expenses, and training materials/contractors.

Because on-the-job training is the mainstay of this program, little funding was allocated to equipment/facilities. Training room equipment, furniture, facilities, etc. were obtained through agency donations of used materials. The increase in funding from pilot to operating reflects an increase in the number of trainees hired by the program.

Primary funding is centralized within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM); each Directorate and Office is assessed an amount equal to its percentage of the total number of OASAM employees. This assessment is placed in a central budget to finance the programs. Additional funds are obtained from assessments of other DOL agencies using the program.

Program Staff

Program Coordinator (Management Analyst), GS-12/13. Responsible for overall direction, management, and coordination of the program.

Assistant Coordinator (Management Services Assistant), GS-8.

Training Environment

Dedicated training room with capacity for 20-25 trainees seated at tables/desks. Three office work-stations and three word processing machines are available for trainee use. Audiovisual Equipment: one video camera and tripod with casters, videocassette recorder, one monitor, and tape recorder.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

DOL's recruiting philosophy places emphasis on candidate attitude and indicators of candidate strong work ethics. Recruitment sources include merit staffing certificate based on vacancy announcement, current DOL employees, special employment programs (District of Columbia Government), D.C. Public School System, community-based and religious organizations.

Selection Process

Candidates must pass the Civil Service clerical examination (written). The interview process focuses on possession of a positive attitude and strong work ethics.

Successful candidates are hired as GS-322 clerk-typists, grades 2, 3, or 4 under career conditional appointments. Candidates who do not type 40 words per minute are hired as GS-303 clerks and are converted to GS-322 after they attain 40 words per minute.

Continuous Interview Process/Staggered Reporting Dates

Due to its relatively flexible program structure, the CSP utilizes two unique mechanisms: a continuous interview process and staggered reporting for duty dates.

The interview process is continuous, with eligible candidates referred by outreach efforts and other recruiting contacts. Interviewing on a continuous basis permits better opportunities to draw from various groups to meet affirmative action goals and faster turnaround time for filling vacant program slots as a result of a stockpile of qualified candidates. The CSP is actually continuously in session as opposed to having sessions which begin and end. Consequently,

the CSP uses staggered reporting for duty dates which operate to enter a trainee into the program whenever there is a vacancy; this is in contrast to bringing a group of trainees on board simultaneously on a given session-beginning date.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

The CSP can be described as heavily focused on work assignment and on-the-job-training (OJT). Immediately upon program entry, the trainee is made available for work assignments, either in or away from the training lab. When the trainee has gained the necessary skills, as judged by the program coordinator, the trainee is referred to managers with vacancies or the trainee is requested by a manager who has had experience with the trainee during the program. The trainee remains in the program until selected for a vacant position.

Daily Operations

The CSP typical daily operation consists of a 30-minute morning training session, 6 1/2-hour OJT assignment, and training sessions scheduled as needed.

The morning sessions begin promptly at 8:15 a.m. in the training room and cover a range of subjects (see Training). Trainees discuss current on-the-job training assignments, need for traditional training, upcoming workshops, and selected topics (self-esteem, self-control, communication processes, and management objectives for current and future fiscal years).

Following the morning session, trainees who are scheduled for OJT assignments report to their OJT contacts. Trainees not on OJT assignments remain in the training room and work on special projects assigned by the coordinator.

If a special workshop or a technical/individual training session is scheduled for the day, trainees will attend those sessions as appropriate with the understanding that they return to the OJT assignment or training room upon completion of the training.

Wrap-up sessions are held at periodically. At these sessions, trainees discuss specific work-related topics or work assignments initiated or completed during the course of the day. Problems and the need for additional workshops and training are also discussed.

Positive reinforcement and information-sharing are the driving forces behind the morning and afternoon sessions. The sessions are also designed to strengthen oral communications skills and to provide an avenue for understanding the significance of problem-solving and decision-making techniques in the work setting.

Training

Training needs are discussed and defined by the trainee and the coordinator. The coordinator selects modules, instructors, and trainees for each module. Training is tailored to meet the needs of the trainee, requirements of OJT assignments, and eventual permanent placement. The CSP uses course designs and materials developed by a variety of organizations. Courses include professionalism, telephone techniques, communications, word processing, DOL orientation, concepts of management, and office skills. Formal training also includes special workshops designed to assist trainees in the transition to work; topics include self-esteem, goal-setting, principles of work ethics, etc.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Prior to and during the program, the coordinator contacts DOL managers to arrange OJT assignments and to ensure that a variety of experiences exist for employees in the program. The coordinator discusses workload, backlog, knowledges/skills, and time-frames with the contributing managers. The length of assignments depends on organizational needs and the trainee's development schedule. Based on the information above, trainees are selected for OJT assignments and the following procedures are implemented:

- o Duties and responsibilities are outlined by the OJT contact.
- o The coordinator monitors the progress of the trainee by maintaining continuous communication with the OJT contact. The OJT contact provides oral and written performance assessments of the assigned trainee.
- o If a particular trainee demonstrates inadequate knowledge/skills/personal attributes to successfully perform the OJT assignment, the coordinator provides additional training to correct the situation and/or replaces this trainee with another trainee.

Request for Specific Training by DOL Managers

If there is a need for retraining or specific training of an incumbent clerical employee not associated with the CSP, the immediate supervisor contacts the program coordinator with information on the need for skills enhancement. The coordinator is provided with copies of the employee's position description. Schedules for specific training are developed by the immediate supervisor of the employee and the program coordinator.

At the end of a 2-week period, the program coordinator discusses the need for continued training with the employee's immediate supervisor; the supervisor informs the coordinator of the employee's progress as a result of the specific training received. The program coordinator may recommend additional training based on discussions with the employee and the supervisor.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

Trainees are placed in agency (permanent) slots as soon as they are selected by an office; this can occur at any time since the program uses an open-flow approach (no structured time frames). Successfully performing trainees remain in the program until placement.

When trainees leave the program, several post-placement steps are followed. Follow-up reports are obtained from new supervisors and, if required, additional specific training is identified. Finally, the program coordinator will track the employees' progress throughout their DOL career.

Experience/Evaluation Based Recommendations for Program Modification

During the pilot program, several different delivery methods were tested for the training modules. After careful review of the results, a determination was made to:

- o increase hours spent working at actual on-the-job training assignments.
- o increase the workshop leader responsibilities for CSP trainees.
- o obtain recommendations from the CSP trainees on what special workshops would be most beneficial and on the selection of outside workshop leaders and guest speakers.
- o develop an internal newsletter charting trainee progress/assignments.
- o offer more workshops on the transition from school/home/private sector to Federal government, the basic skills problem in the workplace, the need for a quality workforce, and upgrading attitudes about clerical assignments.
- o offer more mini-workshops (1/2-hour) on self-esteem, training-is-not-criticism, and role of the supervisor.

Program Performance

The program has exceeded expectations and has met the stated objectives. For example, requests to fill temporary absences have outnumbered the program's ability to respond to all requestors. In addition to assisting offices during periods of peak workloads, trainees are also completing special assignments in the training room. Requests from supervisors of current DOL employees have resulted in inclusion of current staff in special workshops as well as individualized training. Additionally, when permanent vacancies arise, CSP trainees can be reassigned immediately to vacant positions or can compete under the Department's vacancy announcement system.

The CSP has appointed 45 candidates to GS-2/3 career-conditional positions in the training program. Twenty-five trainees successfully completed the program and were placed. Three left the program for other jobs.

EXHIBIT 1

VIDEO/AUDIO TAPE LIBRARY

To capture the attention of new employees and to recapture the attention of current employees, audio and video tapes, such as the following, have been developed to enhance the training program:

- o Workforce 2000
- o Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
- o What is Good Performance?
- o How to Maintain a Positive Attitude
- o Telephone Techniques
- o Professionalism on the Job
- o Office Procedures
- o How to Handle Conflicts
- o The OASAM Clerical Support Program

In an interview setting, guest DOL managers respond to questions related to having positive attitudes and to possessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful clerical employees.

SPECIAL WORKSHOPS

The following workshops were designed and conducted to assist the trainees in understanding the significance of making the transition from personal to professional lives on a daily basis and to help them focus on the fact that they have the power to become and remain productive employees:

- o The Golden Rule in the Workplace
- o Love in our Personal and Professional Lives
- o Fear in our Personal and Professional Lives
- o Personal Issues Workshop
- o Substance Abuse Workshop
- o Smoking and Your Health
- o Alcoholism Workshop
- o Self-Esteem Workshop

- o Thinking on Your Feet
- o Taking Care of Yourself on the Job
- o Effective Communication Processes (Oral and Written)
- o Listening Skills
- o Goal Setting
- o Why I Am a Successful Entry-Level Employee
- o Concepts of Management

EXHIBIT 2

SAMPLING OF TRAINING MODULES

Good Grammar Is Essential

The focus of this module is on grammar rules and usage (with detailed attention to subject-verb agreement and correct punctuation) and on the correct use of grammar and basic writing skill in business and general correspondence.

Instructional Methodology: Practice exercises, written and oral presentations, handouts, discussions, and other techniques.

Professionalism on the Job

The goal of this module is to enable participants to understand the role that a professional image plays in their success as clerical employees. Participants will assess their professional image and discuss strategies which will help them attain the skill, ability, and maturity necessary to match the immediate clerical needs of DOL. Emphasis is placed on developing a positive self-concept that, in the long run, will benefit the employee as well as DOL.

Instructional Methodology: Lectures, videotaped role-play, guided discussions, small group exercises, and handouts.

Telephone Techniques

This module is designed to provide participants with techniques for effective, efficient, and positive telephone contacts with clients. Emphasis is placed on dealing with DOL agencies and the use of the DOL Telephone Directory. By the end of this module, participants are able to use the telephone efficiently and courteously, give and receive information accurately, handle difficult situations politely, demonstrate good listening habits, and courteously screen calls for

managers.

Instructional Methodology: Lectures, videotaped role-play, guided discussions, small group exercises, and handouts.

Vocabulary Building/Acronyms in the Federal Government

This module is designed to help the participant learn words and acronyms unique to DOL and other Federal Government agencies. It also focuses on clarifying the meaning of vaguely familiar words and understanding the subtle shades of difference between words.

Instructional Methodology: Spelling exercises, handouts, discussions, and demonstration of usage.

Written Communication for the Clerical Professional

This module is designed to help participants develop their written communications skills through extensive practice in subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement. Emphasis is placed on a review of standard English. Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to express their ideas in a clear and concise manner, eliminate common spelling and usage errors, and proofread material for accuracy and grammar.

Instructional Methodology: Lectures, handouts, practice exercises, class participation, and discussions.



CLERICAL APPRENTICE PROGRAM

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Career Entry and Employee Development
Washington, D.C.**

Note: The program design presented here refers to the Clerical Apprentice Program as originally designed and implemented. As of this writing, however, management has transferred the program from the Career Entry and Employee Development Group to the Administration Group and is in the process of re-designing the program. The original program worked well and succeeded in meeting its objectives.

INITIAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Clerical Apprentice Program (CAP) was developed by **Dr. Wendell Joice**, personnel research psychologist, and **Barbara Garland**, employee development specialist in conjunction with an agency task force. Initial program development was completed in approximately 8 months.

The program is designed for 10 trainees. Program length is 1 year.

Program Objectives

- o provide training for entry-level clerical employees
- o provide work exposure/experience for clericals
- o bridge the transition from school to work
- o foster career and personal development
- o provide placement opportunities with career ladders

Program Budget

Start-up (pilot) was \$250,000. This figure includes room refurbishing/new furnishings, salaries for program staff and trainees, equipment, and training materials. Annual operating budget of \$170,000 includes salaries and training materials.

Funding Source: Start-up funding was supported by a one-time Workforce 2000 grant to the Career Entry and Employee Development Group of OPM. Operating funding is from the central agency fund (revolving). During the pilot period, CAP was located in Career Entry; after the pilot, CAP will be transferred to the Office Personnel for continuing operation.

Program Staff

Program Director (Employee Development Specialist, GS-12). Responsible for overall management, development, and coordination of the program. Also responsible for some of the training. Director should be skilled in program development, training, and communicating.

Assistant Program Director (Employee Development Specialist, GS-9). Responsible for training, training development, and assistance to the director.

Training Environment

Dedicated training lab with 10 work stations, 1 private (director's) office, 1 semi-private assistant director's cubicle, group work area equipped with two large work tables, 10 IBM personal computers, and 5 printers.

Audio-Visual Equipment: One camcorder with tripod, one videocassette recorder, one video monitor, and one overhead projector.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Recruiting sources include special employment programs (local government), community-based and religious organizations, standard vacancy announcement, and job fairs.

Selection Process

CAP trainees are selected on the basis of their performance in a semistructured panel interview focusing on academic background, attitude, motivation for training, career plans/goals, social activities, and interview presentation (timeliness, appearance, quality of SF-171, interpersonal skills, communication skills).

Candidates must have at least minimal keyboarding skills, approximately 15 words per minute.

Successful candidates are hired under the worker-trainee TAPER authority into developmental GS-303-1 clerk-trainee positions. Trainees are part-time (30 hrs/week) temporary while in the CAP.

Memorandum of Agreement

Prior to program entry, successful candidates are requested to read and sign a memorandum of agreement ensuring that they fully understand the nature and expectations of the program.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

Upon entry to the program, trainees are given 3 weeks of orientation activities/workshops followed by 4 months of structured training. During the initial 4 months, the trainees spend the first half of their 6-hour workdays in training/academic reinforcement and the second half in lab-based work assignments. These arrangements vary somewhat according to assignments.

After the initial 4 months, the trainees spend 2 months in preliminary rotations and 4 months in primary rotations throughout the agency. After 4 months in the CAP, successful trainees are promoted to GS-2.

Training covers office skills; interpersonal skills; word-processing and elementary computer use; mathematics and writing skills; and communications skills. It also covers career guidance, goal setting, workplace orientation and a range of other topics deemed appropriate.

Upon successful completion of the CAP, trainees are converted to career-conditional GS-3 positions. After permanent placement, trainee progress is tracked and refresher work/periodic counseling is administered.

Practice Assignments

Prior to the onset of the program, CAP staff survey the agency to elicit work assignments. Two types of assignments (work belonging to other organizations which CAP trainees perform free of charge to the originating organization) are elicited:

- o Assignments which can be performed by the trainees in the training lab.
- o Assignments which must be performed in other offices throughout the agency.

During the initial period of the program, in-lab assignments are performed. After sufficient orientation/training, agency office assignments are handled (these assignments are for 1 to 2 days maximum; they are not rotations). Originating offices are requested to evaluate the quality and timeliness of the completed work assignments.

Rotations

Rotations are extended periods, 2 weeks or more per office, in which trainees work in a series of different offices. CAP uses two sets of rotations. During each rotation, trainees spend 3-4 hours in the assigned office and 1-2 hours in the training lab refining advanced training/ skills. Rotation set one is considered preliminary and consists of trainees rotating (2 weeks per office) through various offices within the immediate organizational group. During preliminary

rotations, CAP trainees are evaluated for progress and readiness; trainees use this as a trial run.

Rotation set two (primary rotations) consists of trainees rotating (3-4 weeks per office) through different organizations and career fields in the agency. Managers use these rotations to observe trainees, evaluate them, and make hiring decisions. Trainees use these rotations as career exploration, exposure, and other final preparation for placement.

All rotations, evaluations, and assignments of work within rotations are carefully pre-arranged and organized by the CAP management staff.

Primary rotations are geared to expose trainees to managers and to each of the available career areas (secretary, accounting technician, personnel assistant, annuitant services/management assistant) to facilitate a successful placement match based on trainee interest and skills and the needs of the hiring organization. In each of the career areas, the GS-3 incumbent begins as a clerk-typist.

Career/Personal Counseling

After spending much of the training program as general clerks and clerk-typists, the trainees are provided career interest/ exploration workshops to assist them in focusing on career goals and areas.

Arrangements for ongoing career counseling/interest exploration and periodic personal (check-up type) counseling are established in the CAP schedule. The importance of both cannot be over-emphasized.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

Career Ladder

Upon successful completion of the program, trainees are converted to career-conditional positions and placed in job series according to the organization (personnel, accounting, etc.) that selects them.

Experience/Evaluation Based Recommendations for Program Modification

- o The content of the 3-week orientation should be expanded and presented over a longer period in the program.
- o Career awareness and counseling workshops should be implemented earlier in the

- program.
- o A mentoring program, to complement career counseling, should be implemented.

Program Performance

The first session of CAP began in October 1988. Ten trainees (all minority) were appointed to GS-1 temporary (part-time) clerk positions. Trainees included seven females and three males. Age/Experience Mix: All recent high school graduates. Three trainees left the program (one entered the Army to pursue education, one was hired away by another agency, and one resigned). The remaining seven trainees completed the program and were placed in permanent positions.

EXHIBIT 1

TRAINING MODULES

Orientation to the World of Work

This module is designed to help trainees make a smooth transition to the work environment. Topics include:

- Attitude and image
- Career management
- Goal setting
- Health management
- Job vs. career
- Money management
- Pay and performance
- Professionalism
- Self-esteem
- Self-motivation
- Skills, knowledges, and abilities
- Support systems and networks
- Teamwork
- Time and attendance
- Workplace basics

Orientation to the Federal Government as an Employer

This module introduces trainees to their new employer--the United States Government. Topics

include: Organization of the Federal government, the Civil Service, the merit system, standards of conduct, the Hatch Act, equal employment opportunity, the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act, rights and responsibilities of Federal employees, etc.

Orientation to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as an Employer

This module gives trainees a more in-depth orientation to OPM than the general agency orientation that all new employees receive. Topics include: History and mission of OPM, OPM's workforce, OPM regional and area offices, the OPM organization chart, worksite basics, union representation, etc.

Communicating Effectively on the Job

This module helps trainees to enhance their job performance through use of effective communications skills. Emphasis is placed on improving skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interpersonal communications.

Computer Literacy

This module introduces trainees to the use of personal computers for word and data processing. Trainees also learn to use WordPerfect software.

English Essentials

This module gives trainees a review of basic grammar fundamentals, along with practical application to sharpen their skills in weak areas.

Mathematics Review

This module provides a review of mathematics fundamentals. Exercises include typical computations used by government clerical personnel.

Office Fundamentals

This course teaches the basic office skills needed to perform successfully in entry-level support positions. Topics include: understanding the clerical support role, telephone techniques, records management, time management, handling the mail, organization skills, correspondence procedures, and locating information.

CLERICAL TRAINING PROGRAM

**Panama Canal Commission
Balboa Heights, Republic of Panama**

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Clerical Training Program was developed by a team consisting of **Judith Baerg**, supervisory employee development specialist, **Iris Vives**, employee development specialist, and **Virginia Hernandez**, employee development specialist. Suggestions were solicited from administrative officers throughout the Panama Canal Commission in developing program content.

The 6-month program is designed for 10-15 trainees (determined by agency needs analysis).

Program Objectives

The Clerical Training Program was designed to provide the Panama Canal Commission with a pool of well-trained entry-level clerical personnel. It was hoped the program would not only decrease the need for continuing use of temporary clericals, but also alleviate the burden of the selection process for permanent hires.

Program Budget

Normal operating budget is \$100,000 which covers salaries of staff and trainees, contracted training, and supplies.

Program Staff

Program Coordinator (Employee Development Specialist), GS-235-9.
Responsible for general administration, program development, and some training. Clerical support is shared with other programs.

Training Environment

As one of the programs administered in the agency's training center, this program has access to all equipment and facilities in the training center, including a dedicated classroom, microcomputer laboratory, and audio-visual equipment. Typing classes are contracted from a local community college.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The Clerical Training Program seeks candidates with little or no experience and with potential to move beyond entry-level positions. Candidates must pass the Civil Service Clerical Examination and self-certify typing speed of 40 words per minute.

Trainees are hired as GS-2 clerk-typists in career-conditional appointments. Selection process is a panel interview.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

Annually, the CTP conducts a 6-month training session for newly hired entry-level employees. Trainees are placed in career-conditional GS-2 clerk-typist positions. Class size is determined by staffing needs assessment and budget limitations.

Because all candidates are Panamanian citizens whose first language is Spanish, their English language ability is evaluated as soon as they begin training; appropriate classes in oral and written English are assigned as needed.

Training

During the first 3 months of each session, the trainees are primarily involved in structured classroom training including, but not limited to, workshops in basic personnel processing, basic procurement and accounting, office machines, timekeeping, telephone and office etiquette, maintaining a professional image, Panama Canal Commission organization and functions, agency correspondence practices and procedures, typing, word processing, and introduction to microcomputers.

As a note of interest, three courses--records management, the Panama Canal Commission correspondence manual, and processing procurement forms--are being presented by former program participants who are now employees of the Employee and Management Development Branch.

The curriculum and specific course content is continually monitored, and modifications are made as indicated by feedback from employing units and from trainees themselves as they go into the workplace.

At the end of the first 3 months, trainees begin their rotation assignments; they are assigned to a specific office for 5 weeks. The assignments are developmental and provide trainees with exposure to a variety of office support functions. Rotation assignment supervisors evaluate the trainees using a form provided by the program coordinator. Trainees in turn evaluate the learning experience gained in the rotation, and the program coordinator provides feedback to supervisors.

Trainees complete at least two assignments, sometimes returning to the training center for a special course during the rotation period. Depending on the calendar, whether trainees have already been placed, and the need for other courses, trainees may complete three assignments before being permanently reassigned.

PLACEMENT AND EVALUATION

While initially hired at the GS-2 level, regardless of qualifications, trainees are promoted to GS-3 upon completion of the program, and may be non-competitively selected for positions at the GS-4 level if qualified. Thus, a GS-2 trainee may qualify and be placed in a GS-4 permanent position. Trainees are reassigned to permanent positions upon completion of training, although many selections are made while trainees are still in the program.

If, within a year of initial appointment, the trainee has not been successfully reassigned to another position, the trainee may be terminated. However, the program coordinator works very closely with staffing specialists in the agency's Employment and Placement Branch to ensure that trainees are placed, and in the history of the program none have been terminated because of failure to be placed in a permanent position.

Placement Procedure

The program coordinator has established close working relationships with staffing specialists in the agency's Employment and Placement Branch. They keep her informed of vacant positions and recommend employing units to consider the Clerical Training Program. The coordinator also has close contact with administrative officers throughout the Commission who contact her when learning of a vacancy.

Since the program has now been in existence 6 years, placement is mostly by reaction rather than by action--rarely is it necessary for the coordinator to make an effort to place trainees after they complete the program; most are assured of permanent positions long before they complete their training.

Experience/Evaluation Based Recommendations for Program Modification

- o A dedicated word processing classroom was used for the first 2 years. That has been eliminated, and trainees are now provided with introductory training on microcomputers, to include word processing.
- o Despite some pressure from field offices to conduct two classes per year because program participants are in high demand, only one group has been brought in per year because (1) the program coordinator has other training-related duties and responsibilities, and (2) administering this program has been an emotionally and physically demanding task; the coordinator would not be able to sustain the current high level of energy and involvement if the program ran all year. Additional staffing is not possible at this time.
- o Due to the commonality of the training offered, program entry-level was reduced from two options (GS-2 & GS-3) to one (all trainees enter at GS-2).
- o Agency managers regarded the initial mixed-schedule (trainees spending part of each week in formal training and the other part in an office work assignment) as disruptive. In response, the schedule was changed so that during the first 3 months only formal training is offered; office work assignments follow training.
- o Program length was reduced from 1 year to 6 months.
- o A Cooperative training effort, in which a local college conducts some of the training, was changed to conducting all training in-house except for typing (handled by local college).

Program Performance

The program has more than met its objectives. Field support has increased each year, with the result that most participants are placed well before their graduation. Hiring of temporary clericals is down, and field officials welcome having a well-prepared pool of candidates from which to select for their permanent vacancies. In general, program graduates have excelled in their performance, and many have quickly moved to more responsive positions.

Class 1 1984

Eight trainees were appointed to GS-3 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included seven females (five Hispanic, two Black) and one Hispanic male. All trainees completed the program. As of April 1989, post-placement achievement is: two GS-6s, one GS-5, and three GS-4s. Two former trainees resigned from the Commission.

*Class 2
1985*

Fifteen candidates were appointed to GS-3 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included 12 females (8 Black, 4 Hispanic) and 3 males (2 Black, 1 Hispanic). All trainees completed the program. As of April 1989, postplacement achievement is: one GS-6/7, two GS-5s, one GS-3/6, eight GS-4s, and one GS-3.

*Class 3
1986*

Eleven candidates were appointed to GS-2 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included 10 females (9 Hispanic, 1 Black) and 1 Black male. All trainees completed the program. As of April 1989, post-placement achievement is: one GS-6/7, one GS-6, four GS-5s, and five GS-4s.

*Class 4
1987*

Eleven candidates were appointed to GS-2 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included nine females (six Hispanic, three Black) and two Hispanic males. Nine trainees completed the program. Two resigned from the program; one accepted another position, and the other pursued academic study via scholarship. As of April 1989, post placement achievement is: two GS-5s and seven GS-4s.

*Class 5
1988*

Ten candidates were appointed to GS-2 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included nine females (eight Hispanic, one Black), and one Hispanic male. All trainees completed the program. As of April 1989, post-placement achievement is: eight GS-4s and two GS-3s.

*Class 6
1989*

Ten candidates were appointed to GS-2 clerk-typist positions. Trainees included 10 females (6 Hispanic, 4 Black). The program is ongoing. As of April 1989, 6 trainees have been placed in permanent GS-3 positions.

EXHIBIT 1

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

Orientations

Overview of the Clerical Training Program
Panama Canal Commission Employment Policies
Panama Canal Commission Organizational Structure
Federal Personnel Manual
Safety in the Office
Social Security Orientation
Technical Resource Center Presentation

Office Procedures

Typing
Correspondence Manual
Processing Personnel Actions
Processing Purchasing Forms
Proofreading Skills
Records Management Course
Timekeeping Workshop
Basic Writing Skills
Time Management

Employee Enhancement

Developing A Professional Image

How to Improve Your Listening Skills
Career Dressing
Office Etiquette
Professionalism in the workplace

Computer Training

Introduction to Microcomputers
DisplayWrite 4
SuperCalc 4

EXHIBIT 2

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Basic Writing Skills

This workshop provides the trainee with the basic writing skills necessary to write short memos and other short forms of written communication. It helps develop elements of grammar and syntax and introduces the important characteristics of business writing. (48 hours)

The Communication Experience

This course promotes good communication skills, a positive attitude, and productive work habits. It explores communication at different levels. (16 hours)

Correspondence Manual

This workshop introduces the clerical trainees to the established correspondence procedures used throughout the Panama Canal Commission. Upon completing this course, the trainees are thoroughly familiar with the correspondence manual and will have developed the habit of using it as an important reference tool. (20 hours)

Improved Service to the Public

Instructs Clerical trainees to become more competent, effective, and responsive in serving the public in face-to-face communications.
(16 hours)

Portraying A Professional Image

This workshop develops all the skills and attitudes necessary to perform at a professional level. It deals with attitudes; definition of roles and responsibilities in the organization; how to help management reach its goals; and the importance of communication, organization, time management, personal appearance, and posture in portraying a professional image.
(40 hours)

Processing Personnel Actions

This course provides a broad understanding of the processing steps, as well as procedures and instructions required by the personnel regulations. (12 hours)

Processing Purchasing Forms

This course provides a basic knowledge of the procurement function. The trainees receive reference material from the Financial Systems Manual detailing procedures that will be useful when processing purchasing forms. (16 hours)

Proofreading Skills

This course enables the clerical trainees to develop awareness of the importance of proofreading. They employ different methods in detecting errors in typewritten material. This course is fundamental in assuring the quality of typewritten material. (10 hours)

Records Management Course

This course is designed to teach the proper procedures to create, maintain, and dispose of all types of records. (16 hours)

Stress Management

This informative and highly participative course defines stress, its effect on the individual and the organization, and how to cope with stressful situations that may occur in the office environment. (20 hours)

Telephone Techniques

This course is designed to develop skills and techniques for successful communication by telephone. The trainee will always be aware that the proper use of the telephone creates a positive image of the organization. (12 hours)

Time Management

Clerical trainees learn to identify good time management practices. By better organizing time, they learn to handle increased demands placed on them. (16 hours)

Timekeeping Workshop

This workshop will familiarize the trainees with correct time and attendance procedures. They will learn how to prepare timecards. (16 hours)